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The Commonweal

March 2, 1951

WAR and CONSCIENCE

F. H. DRINKWATER

SHARE IN MANAGEMENT?

The Railroad Unions

JOHN C. CORT

"THE PILLAR OF FIRE"

Light in Darkness

JOHN M. OESTERREICHER

Volume LIII **15c** *Number 21*

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Editor: Edward S. Skillin
Contributing Editor: Philip Burnham
Managing Editor: Edward F. Meagher
Feature Editor: John Cogley
Assistant Editor: William Pfaff

Associate Editors
John C. Cort, Anne Fremantle, Francis Downing
Cinema: Philip T. Hartung
Theatre: Walter Kerr

Advertising Manager: John Brubaker

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The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

"The Miracle" and Related Matters

THE local flurry about "The Miracle" is one indication of how it is among us Catholics in the United States, specifically in the heavily Catholic metropolitan areas like New York. We are numerous, influential, wield great power; we are burdened with an ancient siege complex and are keenly sensitive to slurs, real or imaginary. A movie coming from a Catholic country, received without fuss or flurry in the heart of Christendom, can send our blood pressure boiling and our picket lines parading.

When "The Miracle" appeared we were not content to speak our piece about it, decide whether or not we should lend it our support and rely upon persuasiveness to clarify whatever we found objectionable. We got ready immediately to fortify our philosophy with picket lines, and turned to the power of the friendly state to suppress what we considered to be morally objectionable.

This is not to argue, one way or the other, the intrinsic merits of the film itself; it is only to say that sometimes it seems as if we American Catholics reduce the struggle for the hearts and minds of men to a contest between picket lines and pressure groups and in doing so slight the emphasis Catholic doctrine puts on free consent and reasoned morality.

When Catholics obey the voice of the Church, it is a free act; to pressure or force, even indirectly, others who do not believe, into the same kind of obedience is to ask for servility. Then their natural instinctive resentment is founded on the same self-respect that makes our own willing obedience worthy of free men.

Too often our fellow-citizens are rather inclined to look upon us as threatening liberty rather than enlarging it, as powerful nuisances who put an undue strain on their democratic toleration. Incidents like "The Miracle" whoopdedoo don't make things any clearer to them. We may be respected and our opinions kowtowed to, but too often it is our pocketbooks rather than our principles, our votes more than our virtues that win respect. And certainly no one can deny that we have our victories. But whether these are really victories for the cause we are supposed to represent is sometimes highly questionable.

By threatening rather than persuading, in "The Miracle" case, we may have created a healthier horror of blasphemy, but that is dubious. We may have created a greater receptivity to the truth of Christianity, despite the ill feeling aroused, but that too is doubtful. We may have saved thousands of people from taking a skeptical, cynical view of Catholic doctrine, but neither is that a sure thing. We may have even given those outside the Church further reason to believe that we value their civil liberties as highly as our own; we may have given added proof to the fact that there is nothing in our dogma or our belief that makes us a danger to their freedom. But so is that doubtful. We may have merely made them feel as if they were being treated like children by an alien force that didn't give two cents for their personal liberty.

WHEN a Queen's Council of the Knights of Columbus threw a picket line around a theatre showing "The Bicycle Thief," which is handled by the distributors of "The Miracle," the management cancelled the run of the prize-winning film (rated B by the Legion of Decency). Something may have been proved then. The K of C objected to the film because it "glorified a thief"—surely a surprising way to sum up that remarkable movie—and maybe their success meant a great victory for the cause of honesty. Maybe not.

A diocesan editor (*The Witness,* Dubuque, Iowa) last week wrote: "The Constitution does not guarantee anybody any rights to do what is wrong. Freedom does not mean man has the

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right to do what is wrong. Freedom does not mean a man has the right to poison his fellowmen, nor does it mean he has the right to poison his mind." He was discussing "The Miracle" case, and that is what he wrote, just that, with no further distinctions between the Thomistic notion of the moral freedom of the individual and the civil liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. That kind of oversimplification, we submit, offers genuine reason for the fears of non-Catholics. It is thoughtless and irresponsible, and we question how well it serves the truth of Catholicism. We have our doubts too about the whole "Miracle" fury.

Inflation Politics

ONE area in which cold statistics reveal more than direct experience is that of current prices. Every American housewife is painfully aware that things cost a lot more at the local store. But she does not realize that prices have just begun a new upward climb. She does not know that retail price tags will have to rise again as much as they have since June merely to catch up with present wholesale prices. They always do catch up, for increases are passed right down to the ultimate consumer.

In the best of times higher prices manage to keep ahead of increases in the weekly pay envelope. Wage rates lag, and wage raises soon result in price rises all round. The worker seldom gains anything (except the satisfaction of having a greater number of greenbacks sliding through his fingers) when inflation comes.

When national emergencies are at hand, a certain amount of inflation is inevitable. The shorter supply of civilian goods brings abnormal demand; the rein on prices exercised by competition no longer holds. Surplus purchasing power shoots prices up. This can be offset by higher taxes or channeled into savings (through savings bonds). To a limited extent it can be counter-balanced by such greater production as would result from a longer work week. But scarcity of civilian goods in wartime cannot be counteracted altogether.

The object therefore is merely to limit inflation, as was done in World War II. Unhappily there are signs that the Administration considers this of secondary importance. There are several tempting aspects about financing the present defense effort directly by inflation. If instead of paying as we go, we finance things by expanding credit and issuing new money, we put off (and make worse) the day of reckoning. By pegging the price of government securities above par, we give them a reassuring, if artificial, high value. By holding interest at 2½ per cent we keep down the annual cost of servicing the national debt (and encourage inflationary borrowing at low rates). That is the present policy.

Moreover, by postponing enactment of new taxes, Congress is now allowing purchasing power to increase at the moment civilian production is starting to shrink. And to cap it all we allow farm prices to shoot sky high and plan to raise wage ceilings considerably. (Action is not yet determined on profits.)

In the effort not to displease anybody, to keep the favor of the farm bloc, organized labor and the individual taxpayer, the Administration and Congress seem in the main set on a spineless course. There is a great deal of flurry about controls, and the new nation-wide Office of Price Stabilization is setting up regional offices. But present plans involve little sacrifice for any politically influential group. If everything continues to cost increasingly more, the individual will not necessarily put the blame for this—as he would taxes and controls—on the government. Likewise he will not get very exercised over the importance of maintaining the value of the dollar. That, however, is clearly the duty of the men now in authority in Washington.

• NEXT WEEK •

MAX FISCHER writes of "Koestler's Longing and Despair," as revealed in his latest work of fiction, "The Age of Longing."

"The resistance of Western civilization, as depicted by Koestler, does not look like a proud defense of deeply cherished values, but only a wild goose chase for a vanished world. There is, for example, a sort of helpless desperation in this secularized age, as represented by a materialistic American colonel who has only a faint notion of what the heart of the matter is . . ."

Surviving the A-Bomb

WE KNOW that New York and Washington and Detroit and the rest make inviting targets for enemy bombers. The countryside would

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probably be comparatively immune. For thus far the USSR appears to have but a limited number of A-bombs, and only a certain percentage of attacking planes could pierce our radar, fighter and anti-aircraft defenses. The Russians would perforce concentrate on our key cities.

It is therefore reassuring to hear that the piles of rigid concrete and steel-frame construction that make up the modern American metropolis are ideally suited to withstand just such an attack from the air. That is the conclusion American civilian defense authorities arrived at on the basis of experience with earthquakes and on the basis of evidence gathered in Hiroshima and in the cities of Britain and the Continent after they had withstood, respectively, atomic and blockbuster bombs. As Robert W. Dowling, chief of civilian defense in the Borough of Manhattan, told several hundred volunteer defense workers, "We built better than we knew." There is, perhaps, somewhat less reason than was first supposed for flight from the city.

But all this depends on setting up civilian defense preparations of staggering proportions. As Mr. Dowling described it, one out of every five persons would have a specific role assigned to him for the dread day. There would be unprecedented numbers of auxiliary police, hospital, fire and other civilian defense workers — all with requisite training and specific posts and duties. This would materially limit the terror and demoralization that would necessarily be the object of a Russian air raid.

It is instructive to compare Mr. Dowling's remarks with Morley Cassidy's dispatches in the Newark, N. J. *Evening News* on the "world's first A-Bomb school for survival" at Sunningdale, in Britain's rural Surrey. Here the experience gathered from the blitz on London is serving as a starting point for future planning. And again the number and proportion of civilian defense workers is very high.

If the international situation becomes sufficiently tense, flight from the cities is prescribed for the world's last real civilians and non-combatants: children, the aged and disabled, and pregnant mothers. Of those who remain it is estimated that 90 per cent will be warned in time.

Seconds after the attack a vast defense apparatus will spring into action. The intense radioactive area will be delimited. Decontamination squads will rush to the aid of victims from the area to combat radioactive effects. Ambulances, doctors, first-aid crews and firefighters will be on the job at points designated.

Meanwhile there will be a complex series of tasks for engineers. Important roads will be cleared of rubble. Broken water mains will be repaired. Live power lines and broken gas mains will be shut off. Emergency food supplies and temporary billets at a safe distance will be provided for refugees from stricken areas. All this would be centrally (and locally) directed from a well-devised master plan.

Even with all this defense preparation an atom bomb dropped on a large city might well claim victims by the thousand. But it would not terrorize, demoralize and paralyze the city for long. Its life would go on and the people's will to resist would continue. That is, if defense preparations consist of something more than passing the word that when you hear the signal you should dive under the nearest desk.

Up to now military experts have consistently held that an effective, if not nullifying, defense could be found for every offensive weapon made by man. Civilian defense against the A-bomb on the scale described hardly qualifies as that. But in preparing people for what to expect and in setting up efficient counter measures, it robs an atom attack of much of its effectiveness and of its terrors. Civilian defense of such a calibre may thus serve as one more telling instrument in dissuading Russia from taking that fatal step.

No Retreat

WITHIN the last few days the State Department, in the person of two of its Far Eastern officials, has, in a quiet way, given the countries of Asia to understand that it would be highly gratified if the idea of a Pacific Pact, similar to the one now in effect among the Atlantic nations, could be agreed upon and implemented by all the nations having an interest in the security of the Pacific area. The Department has purposely been approaching the matter in this tip-toe fashion so as to keep from arousing suspicions of imperialist meddling in Asia. The hope is that, with a little well-modulated encouragement from us, the Asiatic countries will get together of themselves, organize a plan to improve their economies and invite the United States to supply the technical and financial assistance needed.

The men in the State Department who plan American foreign policy can afford to take what amounts to an almost leisurely approach to Asia,

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compared to the attitude they have adopted toward Europe, because in terms of mechanical and military power, Asia is a relatively long-range matter; the immediately decisive theatre, in terms of Western security, is Europe.

In Asia, nevertheless, there are well over a billion people (half of the world's population) and for the most part they live in conditions that are, by Western standards, slum-conditions. As we all know by now, the people of Asia are today in a profound state of unrest and revolt against these conditions, and their revolt sends tremors across the world and seriously disturbs our plans for the security of Europe. Most of our armed strength is, in fact, now tied down by the revolt in Asia. We of the Western part of the world are learning the hard way that there can be no security for any one nation unless it is a collective security. There can be no retreat from the idea of collective security that has already given shape to the United Nations and European Union.

Similarly, in the Pacific area the United States cannot go it alone. There, too, security is either collective or it is not at all. If the primary objective of a country's foreign policy is to guarantee its security, then it would seem to follow that the objective of our Pacific policy should be to encourage the closer cooperation of all those in the area who are willing and able to work their way out of poverty together and at the same time retain their political independence.

Now of course merely to put all this in writing in the form of a Pacific Pact will not in itself fill Asiatic stomachs or guarantee security for us. Nor can a Pacific Pact be thought of as exactly similar to the Atlantic Pact. Conditions in Asia vary more decidedly from country to country and the primary purpose of a Pacific Pact would not be to restore disrupted economies, but to build new economies. The great advantage to be gained in the signing of a Pacific Pact is psychological: it will give the operation a sense of direction and coordination, it will allay Asiatic suspicions of our motives, and above all, it will give us an opportunity, through practical assistance, to carry our case for collective security to the people of Asia themselves, and to do so in terms that they will understand—not in terms of pious platitudes about the superiority of "the American way of life."

We need to understand that these phrases, meaningful though they may be to us, mean practically nothing to, let us say, most of the people in India, Indonesia and Pakistan, countries where not much more than ten per cent of the people are literate. Democracy means about as much to them as Buddhism does to us.

Ignorance is a two-way street. In a recent Gallup Poll conducted in this country, only five per cent of the people questioned were able to say what Point Four, the program of assistance for underdeveloped countries, is. It should be clear that if we are to understand the world we live in, if we are to have security in the Pacific, we will have to do considerably better than that.

And if those of us who are Catholic would like to see something else instead of Coca-Cola and contraceptives applied to the social turmoil in Asia, then it is up to us to think seriously and constructively about the people of Asia, it is up to us to propose ways and means of improving conditions there and of offering Asia something better than the dregs of Western culture.

Who Causes Smog?

IT IS no bargain we get when we inhale the air in our big cities. The murky atmosphere of New York, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and other industrial centers is saturated with wastes from power facilities, mills, factories and heating plants. When it does not lead to something worse, all this supplies constant irritation for eyes, nose, throat and lungs. And the natural thing is to lay this all at the feet of local captains of enterprise who say, "Let 'er rip" without a further thought.

But the individual citizen contributes heavily to local smog, too, if the rambling city of Los Angeles can be taken as at all typical. A year's study by the Stanford Research Institute shows that three-fifths of these unpleasant materials in the local atmosphere is contributed by individuals. Much of it comes from burning trash in backyards. Then there are the exhaust fumes of 2,000,000 cars and buses and wastes from the heating of homes, stores and office buildings. And in their daily round these busy citizens have impregnated the Southern California air with such noxious ingredients as aldehydes, ammonia, nitrogen and sulphur oxides and even solid matter.

It is no doubt gratifying to the Western Oil and Gas Association, which sponsored this study, to learn that the general public is more responsible than industry for local smog. Maybe people can be persuaded to burn less rubbish. But they need cars and buses to get to work and buildings must be heated when the sun does not shine. The principal responsibility for purifying the atmosphere would still seem to lie with industry.

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War and Conscience

A brief case against Christian pacifism and its opposite extreme.

By F. H. DRINKWATER

SINCE this is a complex and much-argued subject, the present article will be more clear and brief and readable if it is put into formal shape as a kind of thesis.

However, this must not be taken to mean that it claims to speak for or with any kind of recognized authority. In so far as it may be true it will have the authority of truth, and no other authority is claimed for it.

The proposition or affirmation I am making is quite unsensational. Here it is: "War is lawful in a just cause, in which case the citizen must obey the call of his government; and all who wage war are under the obligation of keeping it within the limits of reason, justice and humanity."

This I take to be the traditional teaching of the Christian Church about war, and I say that it is still valid, though this or that clause of it is being denied in principle, or neglected in practice, even by some Catholics.

Let us first add a few remarks by way of explaining the terms of the affirmation, and afterwards consider the possible objections which might be raised against it.

War is lawful. It might be said, as Pope Pius XII said in his address of Christmas, 1948, that war can sometimes be *obligatory* upon a nation, or upon the family of nations, to suppress an unjust aggressor. But for present purposes it is enough to affirm that war is lawful. It is not in itself evil or sinful, though it brings in its train so many evils both material and moral that it must be resorted to only when all other means have failed.

In a just cause. This means, to set right some grave public injustice committed against the natural law, grave enough to be commensurate with the evils inevitably accompanying the use of force.

The citizen must obey the call of his government. This follows from the Fourth Commandment, as explained in the catechism. One main purpose why nations and governments exist at all is to keep the peace within and ward off aggression from without. We are usually born into a nation just as we are born into a family, and membership involves duties as well as rights. The duty of sharing in defense includes the duty of being fit and ready to do so, hence a law of conscription must be obeyed, even in peacetime.

All who wage war. That is, the obligation of keeping war from becoming sub-human lies upon all in their measure; upon high statesmen and military leaders most, but also in some measure on the ordinary soldier and citizen. The obligation falls not on Christians only, since it is an obligation of the natural law; but Christians may be expected to show themselves more alive to it, and those who speak for the Church have a duty to teach this obligation clearly at whatever cost, both before and during the war.

If leaders in the State, or the Church, fail in their duty, there is still an obligation on the individual, according to his lights, to keep war human. If others on his own side, or even his Government should use unlawful military methods in a just war, the obligation on the individual is still to prevent such methods by any means open to him, and not to withdraw his assistance from the war itself.

If some theologians have said that a just war becomes altogether unjust if unjust methods are used, they were clearly making an over-hasty and careless deduction. We may well say that the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were unjust, but that did not necessarily mean that every Allied soldier ought at once to have laid down his arms.

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THE limits of reason, justice and humanity. What these limits are, in any given war, may be difficult for the ordinary citizen, or even the ordinary theologian, to ascertain. But they must certainly be ascertainable. The general principle about the use of force is well known: that no more force should be used than is needed to obtain the object aimed at. Modern scientific warfare makes no difference. It is true that modern warfare does tend to become sub-human, and men have increasingly thrown aside restraint. Many people, including many priests, say that this tendency cannot be resisted, that it is no longer any

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REV. F. H. DRINKWATER is an English priest who contributes to the London Catholic Herald and People and Freedom.

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use to talk of setting limits to what is done in war. This (my proposition affirms) is a cowardly lie. Men are affected by original sin, but they have free will, in this as in other matters. They must control themselves even in war, as they have often done in the past, and there are in fact strong forces working towards mercy and humanity as well as towards their opposites.

If, indeed, war must be unlimited by considerations of natural law, then war would have become unlawful, because no possible war-aim could be commensurate with the abandoning of the natural law itself. But even without mentioning the light of Christian teaching, or the help of grace, strong motives of ordinary self-interest and self-preservation urge that limits to war should be set and preserved.

If the atomic bomb, used without restraint, would destroy civilization or perhaps the human race itself, then it is safe to say that the atomic bomb must be used only with restraint, and responsible theologians and conscientious military men ought to think out in good time beforehand the restraints needed, and if possible embody them in international conventions. Men have free will, even in this scientific age.

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OBJECTION: "War never attains it object. What results is never lasting peace, but always the seeds of another war. Pacifists are giving the right example, and we must hope they will finally persuade their fellow-citizens in every nation that non-violence is more practical."

Governments exist for a people's defense against aggression and disorder. No Government therefore would have any right to disarm, unless the nation was practically unanimous in deciding on the policy of non-resistance. In a world containing totalitarian power-maniacs, the non-resistant nation would certainly be invaded and reduced to slavery by the now familiar methods of secret police and concentration camps. Of course time might bring a change of heart in the conqueror, but also it might not.

However, I am not saying that a nation would be acting unlawfully in deciding for non-violent resistance. It might easily be the most practical policy for a small nation threatened with overwhelming force. It might even be a noble example for a large nation to set, in a more settled and reasonable kind of world such as we knew in the nineteenth century.

What I say is that any such decision is necessarily a collective one, since war is *of its nature* a collective undertaking (and that is why the individual citizen cannot stand apart from it, *so long as the war is a just one*). In a large nation, it is highly unlikely that there would ever be a collective decision for disarming or non-resistance, and certainly not in the circumstances of the twentieth century. If any large nation wanted to surrender to totalitarian aggression rather than fight, it would probably be because the population was cowardly, not because it had all been converted to non-resistance.

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OBJECTION: "You seem to think that the pacifist advocates a mere passive resistance to aggression. This is not the idea. Peace is not something negative, it has to be constructed. Blessed are the peacemakers. What pacifists advocate is an active, persistent peacemaking, under all circumstances. They are simply externalizing, in society, the Sermon on the Mount: not waiting until the whole world accepts it, but beginning to practice it themselves here and now."

Everybody must honor certain pacifists for their sincerity and their practical example of charity and courage. But the negative part of their doctrine—the preaching of non-violence in all circumstances—is only practicable for them because their fellow-countrymen remain unconverted to it; pacifists preach non-violence under the protection of the armed forces, otherwise the Hitlers of this world would soon extinguish them.

The mistake, theologically, is that they elevate a counsel of perfection for private life into a commandment for public life. To be an "active and persistent peacemaker," as between the gangster and his victim, one must begin by protecting the victim, else there will be nobody to make peace between. The weakness of the pacifist's position is that he leaves the protecting to others and then blames them for doing it.

Objection: "You say pacifists will always be in a minority, but to be in a minority is not necessarily to be in the wrong. True Christians must always expect to be in a minority. The point is, do we really believe Our Lord's teaching on love and forgiveness enough to put it into practice? We pacifists believe that forgiving love has unlimited influence, even (if it were tried) over the Hitlers of this world."

Pacifists are quite right about that. The Christian who takes Our Lord's words seriously must love his enemies, pray for them, see the possibilities of good in them, understand them instead of merely blaming them, refrain from revenge, be ready to meet them half-way as soon as they change their heart, be as friendly as possible towards them, be on their side (as it were) against their worst self.

This is love, but love does not mean that we should stand aside while those we love commit injustice against others we love. To hate the sin and to love the sinner is part of the A.B.C. of Christianity. No doubt it is difficult, but a Christian policeman can love the gangster even while he hits him over the head with his truncheon, and the Christian soldier will pray for the enemy

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he is shooting, or even, if need be, bayoneting. Charity is higher than justice, but it has to be built on justice, not injustice.

Objection: "You still evade the main point, namely Our Lord's explicit teaching such as resist not evil, or turn the other cheek. Such sayings are not addressed to this or that favored soul, but to all His disciples. Above all there is the saying to Peter in Gethsemane: Put up the sword into its scabbard, for they who take the sword shall perish by the sword. Surely this whole incident of the sword is one of those occasions when Our Lord is teaching through action, and what else can He be teaching but non-violent resistance, as shown in His Passion which followed?"

The answer is that the sword incident in Gethsemane was certainly a momentous one, and intended to teach non-violent resistance; but the lesson was addressed not to the State, but to the Church. The question in Gethsemane was whether the Church, as such, should resist persecution by force, and Our Lord said decisively, No.

If force offered a true solution for the Church, God would provide more than twelve divisions of angels, enough to overwhelm any Roman army; but the Church has to win its victory through love and persuasion and sacrifice and martyrdom. Is not this also the true key to the utterances of Our Lord about non-violence as a method of love? We must not fight for religion, either to spread it or to save it; we must fight (when we must fight) for justice and freedom as demanded by the natural law.

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OBJECTION: "You say that war should be waged with regard to reason and humanity, but experience shows that modern war cannot be kept within these limits. It degenerates quickly and inevitably into sub-human methods. Christians who support a war must accept responsibility for this."

They have some responsibility as citizens, and they ought to discharge that responsibility by protesting against unjust methods used by their own side, and refusing to take part in them even when ordered to do so. If necessary, on occasion, they should push their protest even as far as to court martyrdom of some kind; there are times when this characteristically Christian method is the only way, but it is not practical (as the early Church found) to elevate the seeking of martyrdom into a rule of conduct.

Normally, the duty of Christians (and of all reasonable men) would be to protest individually and collectively, according to their opportunities, against inhuman methods such as wholesale bombing of cities, and better still, to urge this point beforehand in peacetime. But this presupposes that they will support war in a just cause. Would their appeal for humanity make any difference? Probably if they appealed to reason rather than emotion they would have a good deal of success.

Objection: "To sum up the pacifist contention: an objective view of the world as we find it today, judged by the light of Christian teaching, forces us to say (a) that a modern war can only be won by means of indiscriminate weapons which have been condemned by Catholic theologians and which violate the traditional teaching of the Church, and that unless prepared to use such weapons it is folly on the part of a nation to go to war at all, for it will inevitably be defeated by the more unscrupulous enemy; (b) as the end does not justify the means, it is sinful to use such methods; (c) modern war is therefore unjust; and (d) to take life in any war but a just one is murder, and therefore it would be a grave sin for a Catholic who believed a war was unjust to participate in it. Father Stratmann in his book, *The Church and War,* quotes Cajetan as declaring that an unjust war is itself a mortal sin."

I do not admit any of the statements in point (a) of above summary, which assumes too easily that the worst must necessarily happen. Men can keep the decencies in war if they decide to. Even in the last war, they managed to sometimes, e.g., in North Africa. Even now, the tendency to sub-human war would be arrested if the minds of statesmen and public were clear, instead of muddled, about the moral issues and the natural law, but nobody tells them. They are muddled because those who should instruct them authoritatively have been too slow in keeping up with the changes in warfare. If all reason-using men, or even all decent and thoughtful leaders of public opinion, would speak up against atom-bombing of cities, there would be enough public opinion to stop it.

Unfortunately some decent and thoughtful people have deprived themselves of their vote in this matter (so to speak) by becoming pacifists; when a pacifist protests against sub-human war, nobody takes any notice, because he protests against all war anyhow. Thus the case of right reason is weakened, because it is deprived of much moral fervor that has gone off in another direction. And now one government is trying to make the hydrogen-bomb, for which there is no visible need or justification whatever.

One may doubt if anybody ever explained to them about the natural law, and they certainly would not listen to you and me on the subject, but they would listen to other statesmen, and to bishops, and editors, and universities, and any large society of public-spirited citizens (except pacifists, of course). I seem to have heard of

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a phrase *le trahison des clercs;* if the *clercs* did their duty, the prospect of sub-human war would soon recede.

Anyone (priests for instance) who says that war is lawful says with equal emphasis that it must be kept within lawful bounds. We must get people familiar with the idea that we go to war in defense of justice and humanity, and as soon as we use more force than necessary, or cause more destruction than is proportionate to the purpose served, we are betraying the very cause we are fighting for.

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OBJECTION: "It would be a mistake to try to use the atom-bomb in a humane way. In the long run it is better to do a Hiroshima over again. Fifty or a hundred thousand civilians are killed, but their deaths are not to be morally imputed to the attacker. They were never intended: they are not on such a scale as to outweigh the good effect achieved: and they do not constitute a means through which it was attained. Were we to deny this, we should have to deny the lawfulness of firing a few shells or dropping a few ordinary bombs on any military target which is popularly inhabited."

This argument is clearly a bad one. A few shells or bombs on a military target with civilians living near, *might* kill a few of them, or with luck might not: the first shell acts as a warning, and people take cover. But an atom-bomb on a city without warning does its work in a single second, and is *certain* to kill 80,000 or more in its vicinity, as well as torturing and maiming as many again. Such an undiscriminating atrocity is quite manifestly against the natural law, and therefore outweighs any possible good effect. And since the evil effects are certain, they are an inseparable part of the complete action by which the good effect is attained, and it is hypocrisy to say they are not "intended." Such arguments would bring moral theology into disrepute.

Nowadays we read of out-of-the ordinary efforts on the part of the Church to reach the lost proletariat. But when we have reached them, what are we going to tell them? The good news in the Creed, of course, but in what kind of a setting? Can it be that the Church's teaching work is hindered, her essential message not easily discernible, under such piles of books and precedents and authorities and canons and commentators, with everybody waiting to find out what everybody else has said?

In our lifetime, when mankind has been visibly dying of war, the "conscientious objectors," for all their over-hasty judgment, have rendered a real service to the Church as well as to the world by mentioning the almost-forgotten word "conscience."

FROM BELGIUM

If You Wish for Peace . . .

I DO NOT believe there are many Belgians, even among those who belong to the Communist Party, who would like to see their country occupied by the Soviet armies. The relative success which the Party had in 1945 was of short duration. In the elections last June the Party got but five per cent of the vote and its paper, *Le Drapeau Rouge* (*The Red Flag*), now has a circulation of only 7,000.

The Belgian people have a profound hostility toward the Soviets, especially now, when their country seems to be threatened. All pacifist propaganda (such as the Stockhold Appeal), which appears to be inspired directly or indirectly by Moscow, has little effect. The Belgian is a realist by temperament; he puts more trust in facts than in lofty ideas, in acts rather than in declarations.

On the other hand, there is nothing aggressive about anti-Communism in Belgium, no wide support for an anti-Soviet "crusade." The evils which war brings are too great and recent experiences show that a war begun with praiseworthy intentions ultimately loses sight of its original purpose.

Does that mean that the Belgian people would like to take refuge in a sort of neutralism such as Gilson and Claude Bourdet defined in France? Not at all. There is no counterpart to this in Belgium. There has been no personality or journal to take up the propositions made by the noted philosopher or by *L'Observateur*. Besides, to the Belgians the idea of neutralism offers no prospect of success. The formula sounds too good to be true.

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IF, HOWEVER, the building of a European Third Force were still possible, it would win many enthusiastic adherents here. For when the citizen of a country with strong traditions of freedom thinks about his country's joining the United States as the latter mobilizes her strength in the defense of freedom in the world, he doubts that this is the only motive of American foreign policy. Belgian public opinion accepts all the consequences of the Atlantic Pact with a sort of fatal resignation.

The Belgian people feel that they have no control over what happens, that their country is no longer master of its own destiny, that its leaders have no real influence in directing international politics.

There is no profound confidence here in the solidarity of the Atlantic peoples. It is clear that nothing good can be expected from Moscow, where an inflexible doctrine dominates, but what does Washington stand for? Will a Truman and an Acheson always direct American policy in Europe? The speeches of Hoover and McCarthy arouse fears that one day the United States will abandon

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Europe or be led by a man like MacArthur into the worst misadventures.

The average Belgian is not convinced that there would be any attempt to stop the Russians at the Elbe. He anxiously asks whether his country is not once more destined to serve as a battlefield, whether his country is not to be sacrificed in advance.

It is not so much rearmament that the Belgians fear as the time required before sufficient defenses can be erected to discourage the Russians from attempted conquest. The fear is that some impatient or maladroit act on the part of the United States might precipitate hostilities.

Naturally there is little sympathy for the life of rearming the Germans, who twice within the space of a generation have sown destruction among us. However, it is not impossible to recognize that this is necessary, especially if it takes place within the framework of the joint defense of all the Western nations. But the idea of pushing for German rearmament before the former victims of Germany are themselves equipped, particularly if this is presented in terms found provocative by Russia, would not reassure public opinion here.

What we lack is not a love of freedom but faith in the means proposed to resist Russian totalitarianism *at the present time.* As the Socialist deputy, Victor Larock, wrote in his party organ: "To have confidence in the new military effort demanded of us, the Belgian public would like to be sure that from this year on the American army will have an important if not preponderant role in the defense of Europe."

★

IF THE future does not seem to promise anything good, it cannot be said that the people are defeatist. I do not believe that many Belgians are willing to let the Russians take over rather than risk a war which they know would result in terrible devastation for their country. But in their anxiety they look for other possibilities than this. In a recent article, Monsignor Cardyn asked: "Can we go on this way?" That is the question which is being asked by the citizens of a country which, after having undergone five years of war, again finds itself the most threatened country in Europe, with the exception of Germany.

The risks of war would be more willingly accepted if the statesmen who control the destinies of peoples, by an extraordinary effort to speak clearly, could point out the peace objectives they pursue. Of course, the urgency of rearming the Western nations, so that they can negotiate as equals with the Soviets, is paramount. We are forced to adopt the old Roman maxim, "If you wish peace, prepare for war." But experience has shown that preparation for war rarely guarantees peace. Therefore the people anxiously wait for the statesmen to declare clearly and with equal force that they are mindful of the Christian motto, "If you wish peace, prepare for peace."

JEAN DELFOSSE.

JEAN DELFOSSE is the editor of the Revue Nouvelle of Brussels.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The Railroad Unions

THE railroad workers have made the President and the country furious again. And still they seem to be no better off than they were before, but rather worse. A judge in Chicago has hit the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen with a $25,000 fine for contempt of court and President Truman has compared the rail union leaders with "a bunch of Russians." And by this it is doubtful that he means a bunch of rank-and-file Russians, for whom everybody has the highest regard, but more likely a bunch of Kremlin Russians, for whom the amount of regard grows smaller and smaller.

The strike is over and it does not seem to have been a victory. Yardmen are still working 48 hours a week. The federal government, which has been the nominal boss of the railroads since last August, has put into effect a wage increase which is about half what it agreed to last month and which the railroad unions rejected.

It does not pay to strike against the government at a time like this in such an essential service as railroads. That proposition seems certain. If you are John L. Lewis and control the labor supply in an industry like coal mining, which is essential but not quite as essential, you might get away with it. But even there your chances are only 50-50. Even John L. Lewis has lost strikes against the government, and not only in a time of emergency, but also in peacetime. And when you are John L. Lewis you have to figure the court fines will be heavier because there seems to be something about those eyebrows that brings out the worst, or best, in a judge.

So far this has been a consideration only of the practical aspects of the problem. Morally, a union has no right to strike unless the good to be achieved outweighs the evil effects. And I doubt if that condition was present in the recent "sick strike" of the railroad men. The soldiers in Korea probably have no doubts at all on the question.

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THE railroad workers are probably asking themselves the question, "Where do we go from here?" They are disgusted with the Railway Mediation Act and its squeaky machinery. When this Act went into effect railway workers were among the highest paid of any in the country. Now they have one of the lowest average hourly rates of the nation's major industries and a large part of them still work 48 hours a week. The march of industrial progress has passed the railroad workers by, leaving them like small boys on the sidewalk trying to see the parade over the heads of the adults in front of them.

If I were a conscientious columnist I would probably

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have looked up the Railway Mediation Act and analyzed its weaknesses here section by section for the benefit and boredom of COMMONWEAL readers. Not being conscientious, I can only say that from my knowledge of the Act it is not so bad in itself except in the cumbersome grievance procedure.

What you have is a bad situation which no mediation act could remedy. On one side you have pressing against you the proposition, "The country cannot afford a prolonged railroad strike even in peacetime, and certainly not on a nation-wide scale." And pushing against you on the other side is the stone wall, "We cannot solve this by means of compulsory arbitration—that is, forcing both labor and management to accept the awards of a third party—because people just won't stand for it." Pressing down on the top of your head is the fading, inefficient condition of the railroad industry, and shoving up under your feet is a multiplicity of railroad unions, most of them conservative and unimaginative, and often working at cross purposes with one another.

I doubt if government ownership would solve the problem. It might, but I doubt it. In any case, before it is tried, we should try something along the line of the new German system of "co-determination" which is going into effect in the coal, iron and steel industries of the Western Zone.

Right now we don't have a Congress with the good sense or courage to try it, so this is largely an academic discussion, but it's an interesting subject, so let's continue anyway. According to co-determination, the plants and mines in these key German industries will be run by 11-man councils, with five to be nominated by the unions, five by the stockholders, and the eleventh jointly. "In the event of a tie vote," says the *Times,* "the latter is to be selected by a special senate to be named by the Federal Government for each entire industry.

"In the case of the labor representatives on the council," the *Times* goes on, "two will be selected from among workers at the site, two will represent the trade unions without regard to employment status, and the fifth will be a prominent personality from public life. Four of the management representatives will be selected from among the stockholders and the fifth will be from public life." The senates, which are similar to the industry councils proposed by Catholic and CIO circles in this country, would be built up along the same lines, but with the public representatives being appointed by the government.

★

PERHAPS the whole idea is too extreme. It does take final control out of the hands of management and give it to an outside party. This is a drastic remedy which may be necessary in Germany, but which we would have difficulty selling here, even though Congress should become much more sensible and courageous and the railroads should alienate even more people with their sloppy and highly fatal operation of the trains.

It is the underlying principles of "co-determination," however, which we cannot afford to ignore. These have proven to have so much appeal for the workers of Europe that we now find German Socialists moving away from the public ownership principle, as practiced in Great Britain, and flirting with a system which is far closer to the papal encyclicals than it is to *Das Kapital.*

The big principle is worker participation, that is, labor sharing through its representatives in the making of policy decisions. It involves giving the workers an outlet for their creative energies which they usually cannot find today in their work. It means increasing their interest in and their enthusiasm for the jobs which take up half of their waking lives. It means soliciting their suggestions as to how those jobs can be done more efficiently and profitably. It means promoting the "we spirit" as opposed to the "I spirit," and not just the "we spirit" in the sense of we-the-workers, but also the "we spirit" in the sense of we-the-workers-and-the-bosses, at least in those matters which we have in common.

We don't have to go to Germany to see these principles being put into practice. We don't even have to go outside the railroads. We can see the thing done in the repair shops of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. We can see the thing described and extolled in the pages of such solid business organs as *Fortune* (see January, 1950 issue and article on plan adopted by the Lapointe Machine Tool Co. and the CIO Steelworkers).

★

IT WOULD probably take a law to make the railroad operators give their workers the modest share in management which the B. & O. shop system involves. It would take more than a law to sell the idea to the old-school labor leaders on the railroads. And unless one side or the other has some enthusiasm for the idea, worker participation is a dead duck.

I am afraid that railroad labor is still in the first stage of collective bargaining: the let's-get-more-and-more-for-less-and-less stage. The only trouble is that there isn't as much to go around as there was once. The time has come for either the operators or the unions, or both, to unwrap their brains and bend them to the job of thinking up a new approach. The old one has come to the end of the line and there just isn't any place to go on that track. There isn't even a good reliable bumper.

JOHN C. CORT.

An Appeal

SISTER HILDEGARDE of St. Peter's Mission Center, 614 Cleveland Avenue, N.W., Canton 2, Ohio, sends us a letter from Father Schindler, of Schotten, Oberhessen, U. S. Zone, Germany, who appeals for funds to build a church for 2,000 Catholic expellees in his charge. "There is no proper place where these people can gather for Mass. . . . The building of an emergency church is a pressing need. The Catholic people here are anxious to devote their time and their strength to it, because it is a question of preserving their most sacred treasure. But there is no money."

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Communications

Isolationism

New York, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: Since you have paid me the dubious compliment of a prolonged castigation in the front pages of your issue for February 9th, you will, I am sure, allow me at least some less important space for a reply.

After doing full justice to my definition of "isolationism," you seem to turn about and ascribe to me a kind that I cannot recognize. You explain to your readers—in all fairness—that I do not believe in political or diplomatic or industrial or economic isolationism; that the only kind I advocate is abstention from armed interference. So far, good. But you proceed to quote certain phrases from papal utterances *"passively indifferent," "mere spectators," "apathetic neutrality,"* as if these were a description of the sort of isolationism I favor.

I submit that I have never sinned in any of those respects. It is not in my nature to be apathetic, neutral, passive, indifferent. I recognize as well as any man that aloofness in regard to human suffering is, as the Holy Father says, "alien to the Christian instinct." But it is my conviction that if America, ostensibly in the interest of the suffering peoples of Europe, sends armed forces into, let us say, Italy, France, Germany, the result will be first a series of civil wars (for the Communists in all those countries are numerous and powerful) and that close upon the heels of civil war will come another world war. The end result will be not the lessening but the enormous increase of human suffering. I should have thought that fact sufficiently demonstrated by the two previous world wars, but if we need another example we may consider the condition of Korea, now that we have "liberated" it.

Again you quote from the Holy Father, ". . . the close union of *all* peoples who are masters of their own destiny and who are united by sentiments of reciprocal trust and mutual assistance is the *sole* means for the *defense* of peace and the best guarantee of its re-establishment."

I cannot see in that passage a call for military alliance. The Holy Father seems to have in mind a more honest and courageous "League of Nations" or "United Nations." The League died because it did not measure up to the Pope's description. Nor is the UN based upon "reciprocal trust," and "mutual assistance." Still less is it a "union of peoples who are masters of their own destiny." If and when the kind of Union described by the Pope, or even a reasonable facsimile thereof, appears, I shall be, if I am here, one of its most ardent champions.

Finally, we who are skeptical of the plan to produce peace by waging war, or even by challenging to war, rely heavily, as you have indicated, upon the Holy Father's words: "Sift the troubled 12 years of our pontificate; weigh every word that our lips have uttered, every sentence our pen has written; you will find in them only appeals for peace."

When the Popes in earlier days called upon the Christian peoples to go to war, they did not disguise the call as an appeal for peace. They spoke out boldly. I cannot think that Pope Pius XII lacks the forthrightness of Pope Urban II, or, for that matter, of St. Bernard or Peter the Hermit. I am sure that he remembers St. Paul's words, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for battle"? If and when the time comes for armed intervention, the Holy Father will not still be calling the world to witness that he wants only peace.

(REV.) JAMES M. GILLIS, C.S.P.

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THE question was not Father Gillis' personal nature. What Pius XII wrote was: "A *people* threatened with unjust aggression or already its victim, may not remain passively indifferent . . . ; all the more does the solidarity of the family of *nations* forbid others to behave as mere spectators, in an attitude of apathetic neutrality. Who will ever measure the harm already caused in the past by such indifference to wars of aggression . . .?

Later he added: "Among (the goods of humanity) some are of such importance for society that it is perfectly lawful to defend them against unjust aggression. Their defense is even an obligation for the nations as a whole, who have a duty not to abandon a nation that is attacked. *The certainty that this duty will not go unfilled will serve to discourage the aggressor and thus war will be avoided or, if the worst should come, its sufferings will at least be lessened.*"

Father Gillis may be able to square this with his belief that "the Holy Father's kind of isolationism [sic] is the one I have been preaching these many years." We cannot.

Nor can we accept his interpretation of the Pope's recent call for unity among peoples who are "masters of their own destiny" as referring, not to the arming of the West, but rather to a utopian league of nations, especially since the Holy Father's words were preceded with: "It is necessary then that nations should not be led by motives of prestige or antiquated ideas, and so create political and economic difficulties against the strengthening of the national forces of other countries, while they ignore or take no thought of the common peril."

Father Gillis is surely not alone in dreading the suffering that will come with another war. But how far the doctrine of isolationism is responsible for the sufferings of past wars is also something to think about. The Holy Father himself asks, "Who will ever measure the harm?" Father Gillis can point to the concrete horrors of the last war. Fortunately, the critic of isolationism is unable to counter by pointing to a world in which a Hitler was finally victorious. But the memory of what was found at Dachau and Buchenwald may give some idea of what it would be like.

The point is that with an aggressive totalitarian force at large in the world, whatever choice free people make

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they cannot escape anguish until it is stopped, either by force or, as we hope in the present case, by the threat of force. If Father Gillis knows any other way of stopping aggression, short of direct divine intervention, we should like to hear about it. All of us, including the isolationists, owe our debt to those who won the victory of 1945, and we may owe even more, in the long run, to those men who are, as Father Gillis chooses to put it, "liberating" Korea.

Father Gillis identifies the isolationists as people who do not believe we can "produce peace by waging war." There may be people foolish enough to hold this, but he is wrong if he implies that it is a belief nurtured by all critics of isolationism. We made ourselves clear on that in two recent issues of THE COMMONWEAL.

In the January 12 issue we wrote: "War is the antithesis of peace; the only justification for it is the knowledge that peace is no longer possible and the possibility for peace-making must be restored." In the January 19 issue: "War is the breakdown of society and it is always an illusion to think that man is making peace when he is making war. He is simply restoring a condition of peace in the world; peace-making really begins with the armistice and it is an illusion to think otherwise."

Father Gillis, as always, proves to be a vigorous, stimulating controversialist. But we still find no justification for his numbering Pius XII among the isolationists he represents. No one has claimed that the Pope covertly calls for a crusade—a most unlikely possibility, in any case, in the nationalistic, secularized society of a divided Christendom—or for a Holy War. We clearly said, "The Holy Father certainly doesn't call for a war. Only recently he reminded us again that 'nothing is lost by peace, everything can be lost by war.'" Father Gillis may be answering an argument in his final paragraph, but whatever it is, he did not find it in these pages.

THE EDITORS.

Unions in the South

New York, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: John Cort ("Unions in the South," THE COMMONWEAL, February 2) gave an excellent summary of the difficulties which face us—and which, for that matter, face the southern workers and the entire southern community.

However, I would like to make one small correction. Mr. Cort, from the best of motives, suggested that his readers could show their sympathy by sending us money. I appreciate his good-will, but money is not the problem. While we are not an extremely wealthy union, our resources are adequate to finance a great many organizing campaigns. Our difficulty is that such a high proportion of the campaigns fail, for the reasons Mr. Cort set forth.

I hope your readers take Mr. Cort's other suggestions to heart, but it would not be fair for us to accept their money.

EMIL RIEVE,
General President,
Textile Workers Union of America.

The Stage

BILLY BUDD

THE process of dramatizing a novel consists of something more than reducing it to dialogue, which is all, I am afraid, that Louis O. Coxe and Robert Chapman have done for Herman Melville's *Billy Budd.* They have not given the material any theatrical tension. Instead of trying to jockey our emotions between hope and fear and thereby tantalize us with a degree of suspense, they have been content to sight a plain course and then plough patiently to its conclusion. Each scene has a purpose, but the purpose is patent: to sew another stitch in Billy Budd's shroud. What is needed is some cross-stitching, some sense of doubt about the outcome, some suggestion that the too obvious pattern of the play may yet yield some surprises. The dramatists have been so anxious to preserve the philosophical point, and tone, of Melville's allegory that they have not bothered to write a play; they have simply laid in the groundwork for a third-act debate on the subject of good, evil, and the literal law which must decide between them.

At best, Melville's novel was unlikely dramatic material. It is so constructed as to oppose, too precisely, the unrelievedly virtuous Billy Budd and the unmitigatedly evil John Claggart. Both are hypothetical notions rather than persons, and the problem of giving them any human warmth or redeeming complexity would probably have proved insurmountable to better dramatists. "Billy Budd" is a further example of that literature in which an idea is substituted for an actuality; it cannot help but be emotionally sterile.

Although the performances as a whole are without much reality, Dennis King, as the British naval captain who must impose the letter of the law upon an impossibly virtuous Billy Budd, is excellent. He is given the task of vitalizing the philosophical debate to which everything else has been sacrificed, and he comes close to bringing it off. The debate itself is ultimately meaningless because it is predicated on set-ups which have no foundation in reality, but King gives it a passionate reading which convinces you that he, at least, finds some urgency in it, and he carries you along with him for a surprising distance. (*At the Biltmore*)

TI-COQ

GRATIEN GELINAS, better known as Fridolin, has a tremendous following in Canada, where he writes, stages, and acts in plays making some use of native materials. "Ti-Coq," his comedy-melodrama about an amusingly resentful illegitimate who nearly finds a place in society and then loses it, ran there for two years, in both French and English versions. Brought to New York, it lasted only three performances, and it is possible to understand the Canadian enthusiasm for it on the one hand and the inevitable American impatience with it on the other.

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The play is a phenomenon—and in this case, a victim—of crossed cultures: a folk play written in the shadow of slick metropolitan form. It has the obvious virtues and vices of the genuine folk play. The virtues include an attractive and almost cocky vigor, an unembarrassed sentiment, and a good eye for the detail of common life. The vices include a bewildering variety of tone, a lack of any selective sense, a tendency to let scenes develop beyond their proportionate value to the play, and an indulgence in obvious moralizing. What hurts "Ti-Coq" most, though, is not its folk immaturity, even when the usual vices have been counted in, but the fact that its folk form is not a pure one. Gelinas has been exposed to the dramatic sophistication of British and American playmaking, and he cannot help but try to cast his play more or less in the "regular" form. As a result, we are presented with a folk talent which is not content to be itself but strives instead for a certain surface resemblance to the well-made play and winds up inviting direct comparison with it. The valid primitive, however naive and undeveloped its formal sense may be, often has a charm and authority of its own. "Ti-Coq" is a spoiled primitive—folk in origin and feeling, but with a technical overlay borrowed from an alien and much more self-conscious culture.

Our own sense of formal unity, for instance, prohibits a complete shift of mood during the course of a play. What begins as a comedy, no matter how many incidental moments of pathos may be incorporated along the way, must end as a comedy. "Ti-Coq" assumes the folk freedom to shift moods violently, to begin as a comedy and to end as a melodrama, at the same time that it makes a superficial pretense at regulation structure. The Canadian may be delighted to see native materials clothing themselves in sophisticated technique; the American, to whom the technique is both more familiar and less impressive, can only be appalled at the bad fit.

Fridolin himself works in a slightly emphatic vein, but nothing that would give Joshua Logan pause. He is appealing as a personality and resourceful as a technician, and his difficulties here with "Ti-Coq" are due to the formal problems inherent in his play rather than to any miscalculation in his performance. (*Closed at the Broadhurst*) WALTER KERR.

Coming Special Issues
of The Commonweal

Education Issue
March 30

Spring Books
May 5

The Screen

PUTTING ASUNDER

IN SPITE of the fact that *"Payment on Demand"* is a glorified soap opera and its whole story is built up as a thesis in defense of divorce, this movie will most likely hold your interest. Jack H. Skirball has given it a handsome production and an outstanding cast who respond expertly to Curtis Bernhardt's good direction. Although the script is rather talky at times and the flashback devices, with the use of scrim curtains that allow you to see through a house, are more theatrical than cinematic, the material flows well as the movie tells its story of a married couple on the verge of a divorce.

The characterization of the wife gives Bette Davis an opportunity to swing into her best emotional stride. Impulsive, ruthless, determined to be a somebody no matter who is hurt as she makes her way up the ladder of success, this woman gets her real come-uppance when her husband suddenly announces that everything has gone stale; boredom has set in; he wants a divorce. "We had a good marriage, but it's gone." But therein lies the mistake. This couple never had a good marriage. The husband, effectively and somewhat sympathetically played by Barry Sullivan, allowed his strong-willed wife to determine their course; and this course with its false standards and artificial financial goals led straight to the unhappiness in which this couple found themselves after some twenty years.

★

ON the morning after the husband moves to the athletic club, the wife tries to answer the "why?" asked by her two perplexed daughters. But only the flashbacks telling of her secret heart reveal the answers. Although it may be true when she says to her husband, "I haven't done anything that wasn't for you and your daughters," the real benefactor of her ambitions, her schemes and her dishonest maneuvers was herself. After her husband walks out, she turns to bitterness and revenge. And after that phase, loneliness sets in. While this film piles up scene after scene as arguments for this particular husband leaving this particular wife, it weakens its own case when it shows that the husband is interested in another woman and offers to marry her. Then in typical soap-opera fashion, the film reverses its position and starts building up our sympathy for the wife. She goes on a cruise; and in the picture's best scene she meets an old acquaintance (magnificently played by the late Jane Cowl). This woman, who was also once ruthlessly ambitious, is now old, jaded, lonely and glad to accept small favors from the gigolo who lives with her. She makes our unhappy wife fully aware of her own position.

Perhaps if one accepts "Payment on Demand" on its soap-opera, divorce-as-a-solution level, it can be consid-

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ered entertainment. It is certainly absorbing and well-acted; and it manages to put over the message that life is not all happiness. Its most convincing scene is at the finale: with the husband wondering if they could find what they had in the beginning if they started over again, and the wife deciding to wait for him. Something tells me that by the end of this picture, you've had enough of this couple and won't turn on the radio tomorrow to find out what happens next.

★

IF PICTURES with a little more active violence are to your liking, however, you may find that a couple of these westerns will keep your mind off of modern life and times. The plot of *"Vengeance Valley,"* which stems from a Luke Short *Saturday Evening Post* serial, doesn't wander far from the soap-opera formula, but it's decorated with some stunning scenery in Technicolor and some very fancy riding and shooting. Burt Lancaster plays the adopted son of Ray Collins whose real son (Robert Walker) is a very bad boy indeed. Burt loves his stepbrother's wife (Joanne Dru) and has a strong affection for his stepfather, so he doesn't tell anyone that his stepbrother is the father of Sally Forrest's illegitimate baby. But when Sally's brothers come agunnin', the fisticuffs and shooting start in a big way. Although Director Richard Thorpe could not overcome the pitfalls of this obvious, melodramatic plot, he does succeed in interesting you in his good cast, and you won't want to miss one minute of the beautiful Colorado settings.

★

FORTUNATELY *"Tomahawk"* manages to give you scenery, Technicolor, a good cast *and* an interesting story. This is another in the current cycle of westerns that dares to speak up for the Indians and suggests that the white men haven't always been too honorable in their dealings. Another surprise that this unusual picture has in store for you is that its heroine, played by Yvonne De Carlo, doesn't get our hero, played by Van Heflin. No doubt it is unfair for me to reveal this twist in the plot, but it seems to me that this is the best way to convey that this really is an unusual western and one that merits your attention. The cast also includes Preston Foster, Jack Oakie, Tom Tully, a lot of Indians and a handsome young fellow by the name of Alex Nicol who plays the villainous US Cavalry lieutenant with just the right sneers and ill will. Of course if Hollywood is going to pull a fast one like this on us very often: with the dashing fellow who looks like a hero being the villain, and the plain guy like Van Heflin being the noble hero, and the flashy heroine not getting a kiss at the finale, and the Indians winning out at the end—well, then moviegoers just won't know what to expect. But then they may go to the movies!

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Light in Darkness

By JOHN M. OESTERREICHER

AS A TOKEN of God's living presence among His people, of the love that walked with them, the pillar of fire illumined Israel's many desert nights, and it was Christ who lighted Karl Stern, a Jew, in his "wandering in doubt through the night of this world" (from the *Rite of Baptism of Adults*). With a sentence of Augustinian quality, he ends the story of his spiritual wayfaring: "There was no doubt about it—towards Him we had been running, or from Him we had been running away, but all the time He had been in the center of things."

To say it at once: *The Pillar of Fire* (*Harcourt, Brace.* $3.50) is a book of unusual beauty, of the modern spiritual autobiographies the best. Utterly unpretentious, it is superbly written, evoking with great clarity many levels of experience: life in a small Bavarian town, at the German universities, in Munich, London and Montreal; the storm-heavy atmosphere of post-war Germany, the political crisis of the thirties; Jewish life at home, in the synagogue, in the youth movement; friendship and courtship; medicine, psychiatry, education, music, art. And interwoven with all these, religious search.

It is a rare thing to find a writer so sensitive and yet so disciplined, so candid in confession but never failing in chaste restraint. Nowhere is he bitter or resentful; he shows a love which can say: "I knew in the depth of my being that we have to partake of the flesh and blood of Christ regardless of whether with persecutors or with friends. This and nothing else is the true and lasting remedy for hatred. It is a hard fact, but it is one of the many hard facts for which Jesus of Nazareth had to die on the cross."

This is the mark of the genuine convert; Dr. Stern does not have to depreciate the old in order to appreciate the new. "Christianity never demands of you to deny anything positive you have ever loved," he writes. "You find all of it again in Christ, but you find more." Sometimes he even carries his gentleness too far. Berdyaev notwithstanding, I doubt that if one were to study Marx "as a human being, one would probably find that his 'opium for the people' is nothing but fury over those who used religion as opium for the people." Nor do I think it happily said that the atheistic philosophy of the author of *Totem and Taboo* is a "tragic historical accident." There is all the difference in the world between Freudian sublimation and supernatural transformation in Christ, and Dr. Stern links them far too simply when

REV. JOHN M. OESTERREICHER is himself a convert from Judaism. A collection of his sermons on the mystery of Israel is about to be published by the Pio Decimo Press, under the title of Seeds of Hope.

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he says that "psychoanalysis teaches us that *Amor* can be transformed into *Caritas*. So does Christianity."

★

IN THE whole fabric of the book, these are minor faults. There is so much in it one will remember for a long time, for Dr. Stern is a man with a gift for fresh expression. To him, as a student of neuropathology, the thirteen hundred grams of colloidal matter inside the human skull represent a flawlessly integrated universe, a meaningful, harmonious complexity, which demands a Creator who is Spirit. But he does not need science to tell him of the Maker of the world. "The very fact," he writes to his pioneering brother in Palestine, "that you read what I am writing here and understand it (never mind whether you agree with me or not) is to me proof of a First Cause." Precisely because he knows the good there is in science, he rightly fears the hell of a "scientific" society, a society without Christ, ruled by a Board of Psychologists and Social Scientists, towards which ,he says, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia are but the first fumbling steps. Christ, he remarks, did not say: "Without me, you cannot do very much"; He said: "Without Me, you can do *nothing*," and a Christ-less world must lead to nothingness.

Without preaching in the slightest, Karl Stern bears two messages, one for the whole world of today and one for the Jews. They are the same truths that opened his eyes to the Church's mission.

First there is the contrast between the Professor Heideggers and the Babette Klebls and the Kati Hubers, between the modern intellectuals and the many Catholic maids he knew in non-Catholic homes. "While we were engaged in a continuous flight from ultimate reality, there existed among us all the time people who lived unknown lives of humility and charity." They were not saints; they had their shortcomings, but they lived lives of hard work and ceaseless prayer, with a profound inner relationship to death, yet lightened by a note of humor. Because of their faith, they were islands of strength and peace when the Nazi nightmare descended. The intellectuals tried to "understand" the situation: the sociologists, for instance, talked about "in-group and out-group," the Marxists indulged in dialectical acrobatics, Professor Heidegger sought a place in the Nazi world—but Babette Klebl said: "What do they want to do against the Jews? It will end badly with these fellows, because our Lord Himself was a Jew."

Maritain could say no more, Dr. Stern remarks, and it was this organic continuity between the Babettes and the Maritains which, more than anything else, convinced him of the divinity of the Church. Without her, the Babettes would not be noble and wise, and without her, and the humility she instills, the intellect is the world's most destructive force. This is the book's first great message. It is with reason that in our century the Church extols the Little Way of St. Thérèse of Lisieux —so much like the "terrible force of humble charity" of Staryetz Sossima—for it is the "only logical answer," comments Dr. Stern, "to the threat of a coming managerial age."

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The Church's catholicity, that she is the home of all truth and goodness, is one of his great experiences. Listening in London to many non-Catholic preachers, he was struck by the fact that whatever was positive in their teaching he also found within the Church; it was their denials, their negations and protests, that made them non-Catholic. But his mind was not made up till 1943, when there came a moment in which the question was no longer: How can you enter the Church when you see her misused as a cloak for social injustice? but rather: If you see the dynamite of social evolution stored in the Church, how can you *not* enter?

He asked himself no longer: How can you, with your scientific training, accept the doctrines of the Church? but: If you see the destruction wrought by scientism and the need for reintegration of all science has gained, how can you *not* become a Christian? No longer did he ask: How can you, a Jew, leave the Jewish community at the time of its most terrible persecution, and join a community in which there are so many anti-Semites? Rather did he answer: "The Jew who has perceived Christ in the Church enters it not *in spite* of the fact that many of her members harbor an ignorant and prejudiced hatred against his people, but *because of* this fact. Here for the first time he is facing the demand of the Gospel in its terrible actuality."

Every Jew at the threshold of the Church is tormented by the thought that baptism might make him a traitor to his people. But Dr. Stern had come to realize that were he to cling to the Jewish pale, forgetting Christ, Whose fire he had felt, were he to dismiss His message as irrelevant and to treat revelation as a tribal affair, he would be—strange as it seems—as anti-Jewish as the Nazis; he would side with the pagan torturers of the Jews. Here is the book's second message.

Karl Stern's affection and admiration for the Zionist pioneers remain undiminished, but he knows there is no "national solution" to the Jewish question; there is only one answer, Christ. He meditates on what would have happened had the Jews in the days of our Lord not clutched at their national independence and isolation as at supreme values. Had they refused, as Christ did, a "national solution" to the problem of the Roman occupation, "they would have died as a nation, but they would have died in Christ." The whole of the people might have become apostles, preaching the good news to all the world, or they might have lived a life of non-violence towards Rome. In either case, they would have lost their life as a nation in order to gain it; they would have transcended their national integrity, and it is difficult to imagine, Dr. Stern concludes, what tremendous historical impulse would have come from a nation thus transfigured.

No doubt, *The Pillar of Fire* will be a great success, but it is my hope that it will be more than a best-seller, that there will be many Jewish readers who, through this book so full of warmth and love, will come to see that a Jew who enters the Church is not at all a traitor, and and that there will be many Catholics who will feel closer to the Jews, eager to see them one with Christ.

Of Note

DOUGLAS HYDE, former editor of the English *Daily Worker,* tells in an article written for the February 2 issue of the *Catholic Herald* (67 Fleet Street, London) why he wrote *I Believed,* the story of his conversion to Catholicism. Here is an excerpt:

> I wanted, when I left the Communist Party nearly three years ago, to escape from the pre-occupation with Communism. I had had enough. Since then I have been given little time to write or talk of anything else. Maybe that is part of my penance. I just could not escape it anyway. Neither can the world at large—and perhaps there is something of penance in that too.
>
> The scourge of Communism may yet prove to be one of the means by which a Christendom which squandered its spiritual resources will be brought back to sanity. I see it as the logical end to a process which began when men, through avarice and through a pre-occupation with purely material things, rejected precisely that heritage which might have assured not only their spiritual welfare but a happy material life and a peace of mind which are notably absent today.
>
> Men rejected the priest and have finished up with the psychoanalyst. They grabbed at material wealth and have weighed themselves down with the astronomical burden of fantastic wars. They deserted a society in which the emphasis was increasingly on mutual responsibility for one based on individual rights, did it in the name of freedom, but now find themselves threatened with slavery as a consequence.
>
> Now, all that has been said before one way or another. But the point is that the consequences of that process are now becoming clear for all to be made to see. The world will see it just in so far as Christians make people see the difference between the Christian "might-have-been" and the materialist "what is." That what was thrown away was so much more valuable than what was acquired. And that God in His mercy still offers another chance.
>
> Christianizing a modern pagan society involves a parallel process of converting pagans to Christianity and winning the acceptance of Christian values by society at large. . . .
>
> It is easy, I know, to write that "the fields are white unto harvest" and to suggest that all that is required is that we should go and join the reapers and then proceed to celebrate a harvest home.
>
> Wishful thinking of that type is not only out of touch with the hard realities of the moment. It can be positively dangerous, for it may well lead us to miss the opportunities which do exist.

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Books

Classics and Commercials. Edmund Wilson. Farrar, Straus. $5.

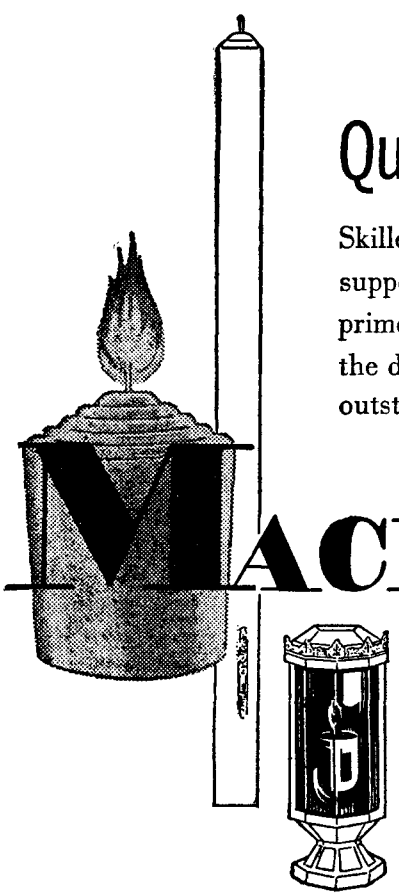
A S FEELING is not enough for art, so sensitivity is not enough for literary criticism. Art needs discipline, and literary criticism a hard core of ideology, without which it will fall into the fragmentary and impressionistic. That ideology, however, must be a system of convictions concerning the present. For the ultimate test of criticism, the ability to understand and discriminate among contemporary works, is a valid one, and all criticism that has politely or violently disdained the present will eventually degenerate into a romantic gesture.

This essential framework of all criticism is constantly in evidence in the works of Edmund Wilson. In this collection of short pieces about the literature of the forties there are any number of subjects: a discussion of Shaw as a political moralist, a long analysis of detective stories, nostalgic reminiscences of Alexander Woollcott, an indictment of the art of Evelyn Waugh, and the virtuoso trick of all literary critics, the inevitable discussion of little known writers. Yet the taste of the critic reflects so well his body of convictions, that it is quite easy to recognize in him, even without any previous acquaintance with his writings, a writer whose ideals and enthusiasms are those of a small segment of the generation of the twenties.

The memories of the ideals for which this group fought, and all that it opposed, create in Edmund Wilson an understandable nostalgia. Those were the times of the first attacks on mass culture, that contradiction in terms; attacks on the *Saturday Evening Post* literary tradition; on the corrupting influence of Hollywood; on provincialism in thought and phoniness in taste; on vulgarity and facility in novel writing and all forms of expression. There was a strengthening of cultural ties with Europe, and Edmund Wilson himself was to write several excellent chapters on the intellectual history of Europe of the nineteenth century. These were times when American criticism made it quite clear that it did not need to be informed of its shortcomings by visiting Europeans.

The selections in this anthology show that Edmund Wilson has maintained the freshness and sincerity of those ideals. Consider the splendid analysis of Joseph E. Davies' prose style; of the meaning of books of etiquette and of Emily Post; of Harold Nicolson's approach to history. Edmund Wilson knows well what he does not like, and many will be grateful to him for having made clear what they have obscurely felt.

But that ideological center which in Wilson was to crystallize in a wary liberalism, always honest if not



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always perceptive, though imparting a form to its negations, never quite understands all the deviations from its own taste. The religious experience, in particular, is not Wilson's forte. Thus, Kafka is not dealt with adequately, Aldous Huxley is a bit too easily brushed off, and there is a going out of one's way to argue on the religiosity of Baudelaire. There is even a surprising lack of taste and a picayuneness in the criticism of Waugh's *The Loved One,* exposing an attitude which borders on the spiteful.

But these flaws are only additional signs that Mr. Wilson is of an earlier generation, not too sympathetic to contemporary literature. He does not approve greatly of these times. As this collection shows, however, he has made an excellent attempt to understand them and even where he falls, he falls with quite a substantial thud. Few critics have that much substance.

SERGE HUGHES.

Lincoln and the Press. Robert S. Harper. McGraw-Hill. $6.

THE American press during the Civil War period was in transition. American newspapers, originally established, published and distributed in the interests of a political party, by 1860 had come to be dominated not so much by a party as by their strong-willed editors. At the half-century, the "party press" had begun to give ground to the era of "personal journalism." The names of Greeley, Bennett, Medill, Bowles, Bryant, Storey and Raymond spelled out a fresh impact felt not only by the citizenry but also by the Lincoln administration at Washington. A paper like Horace Greeley's New York *Tribune* would remain Republican, to be sure, but it would disseminate a Greeley Republicanism. The days of the party parrot were numbered.

Robert Harper has assembled here an impressive amount of data concerning the relationship of Abraham Lincoln to a lusty press which was beginning to realize the advantage of its position as the link between the people and political reality. The relationship between the President and the press emerges from this study as a relationship of sharp contrast; a contrast between the President's calmness, patience and stability and the very antithesis of these qualities exhibited by the editors who, with all their flaws and mistakes, never committed the egregious error of underestimating their influence upon the electorate.

During his administration, while he was trying to resolve in battle the breach between the South and the North, while he was trying to restore national unity, Lincoln was constantly haunted by the threat to Northern unity. Northern Republican editors, while they may have been critical of such issues as Lincoln's timing of the Emancipation Proclamation, or the juggling of Union generals and the prosecution of military strategy, and while they may have harassed Lincoln with editorials and personal letters of dubious advice, nevertheless produced an effect which was more irritant than malignant.

But it was the Northern Democratic editors, with their pro-Southern and pro-slavery sympathies, who provoked the constant collision between the citizen's claim to freedom of speech and authority's duty to preserve the common good. In September, 1864, six months before the war ended, Lincoln announced that the Union army needed an additional 500,000 draftees. This is the way the La Crosse (Wis.) *Democrat* handled the announcement: "Lincoln has called for five hundred thousand more victims! On the 5th of September half a million men are to be drafted. . . . Let the women buy mourning goods now, for in a month or so there will not be enough money in this country to use for that purpose. . . . Patriotism is sick! The nation is discouraged. . . . Continue this administration in power and we can all go to war, Canada, or to hell before 1868."

Government control of this type of journalism usually took the form of sudden and sporadic seizure of an offending editor, holding him in a military prison for a few days or

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weeks and then releasing him if he promised to halt his disruptive activity or if pro-Southern sentiment in the editor's home town posed an even greater threat to unity than did his unhampered vitriolic. Where the government failed to act, mobs of enraged Northern citizens or companies of Union soldiers took the law into their own hands and wrecked the offices of Copperhead newspapers.

MR. HARPER has wisely placed his array of footnotes at the end of the book, in the interest, no doubt, of promoting a certain narrative flow. This helps. But his interesting study might have been made exciting had he chosen to organize his material to parallel more closely the excitement and the progression of the Civil War itself. He has, instead, chosen to report the Lincoln-press relationship in a State-by-State round-up, although on the most crucial issues he comes through nicely with a national survey of the press and its reactions.

Interesting to students of American political history is the anti-Lincoln bias which ran so deep that Wilbur Storey's Chicago *Times,* one of the country's chief Lincoln-hating papers, could describe the President's Gettysburg address with the following notice: "The cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads the silly, flat and dish-watery utterances of the man who has to be pointed out to intelligent foreigners as the President of the United States."

Mr. Harper's study gives historical stress to two items of social and political significance. The first is that the initial danger to a free press is the abuse of that freedom by irresponsible editors and publishers; abuse which invites authoritarian control in the interests of the common good. And the second is that the eternal price of a free press is a constant scrutiny on the part of government, editors and the people into both the conduct of the press and the reflex action of authority.

DONALD MCDONALD.

Operation Heartbreak. Duff Cooper. Viking. $2.50.

AT A PRIVATE celebration of his 60th birthday, Hilaire Belloc replied to praise of his sonnets and strong verse with the remark that having reached the age of 60 he did not care very much whether his verse remained or not. Among the guests were several others who have helped to enrich the tradition of English letters — Chesterton, A. P. Herbert, J. B. Morton, E. C. Bentley—and "a rising young politician," Duff Cooper.

Now 60 himself, and with a distinguished political and diplomatic career behind him, the Rt. Hon. Sir Alfred Duff Cooper, apparently doesn't share Belloc's dim view of his age as a literary turning point. His first novel is of such superior quality that there should be few doubts of its remaining long as a superb example of the art of fiction. If he lives longer, and writes more novels, the health of modern writing will be much improved.

Lily of the Marshes

Alfred MacConastair, C.P.

With poignancy and vivid intensity Father MacConastair, a priest of the Passionist order, tells the moving story of Saint Maria Goretti, a martyr who died in defense of her purity. Growing up in the most wretched kind of poverty, Maria Goretti's brief life on earth was brightened by the fervent piety and love of Our Lord that she exhibited from her earliest infancy until her tragic martyrdom at the age of 12. Strengthened in her agony by her love of Christ and inspired by her adoration of the Blessed Virgin, the simple peasant girl who refused to yield to the impassioned attack of a young Italian today reigns in the great company of saints as an outstanding example of devotion to the virtue of purity.

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Simple, unimaginative Willie, whose ideal was that one should be an Army officer, a member of the diplomatic service, a barrister, doctor or clergyman, goes from one frustration to another in his efforts to fufill his vocation. With rare wit and warmth, Duff Cooper guides him through his struggles with the Army, with officialdom, with women, with his friends who have strange ambitions (like the stage), and with the odd demands of a nation at war. Doomed to be a nonentity in the benign trap of modern life, Willie loses the will to live. Providence has another use for him, however, that redeems the thwarted hero and provides an ironic and exciting climax to the book.

In less than half the length of the average novel, Duff Cooper has performed a brilliant job of narrative and characterization. His exploration into the lives and motives of his people are done with a scalpel, where so many of his contemporaries would be content to wield a pick-axe. His style is deceptively simple, low-pitched, but beneath its calm surface there is a deep sympathetic comprehension of the complexities of human existence and the universal effort to find out "where one fits."

PAUL V. FARRELL.

Correction: The February 23 issue of THE COMMONWEAL was inadvertently marked Number 19, Volume LIII. It should have been Number 20, Volume LIII.

• REVIEWERS •

SERGE HUGHES teaches at St. John's University in Brooklyn.

DONALD MCDONALD is a member of the editorial staff of *The Catholic Messenger*, Davenport, Iowa diocesan paper.

PAUL V. FARRELL is an editor for the Conover-Mast publications.

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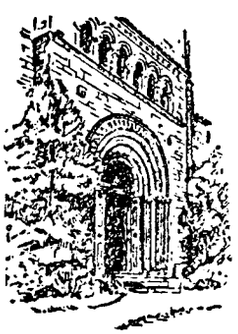

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Correction

Two GRAIL books appeared in the Commonweal *advertisement last week with incorrect prices.* The correct prices are:

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In the March 9 Issue

COMMUNIST CHINA: NATION OR SATELLITE? Harold C. Hinton reviews the present and potential clashes of interest between Communist China and the USSR, and he examines the possibility of Communist China's someday being free of Moscow.

JEAN CHARLOT, by Jerome Mellquist, deals more with the artist's ideas than with his paintings. Almost half of Charlot's new volume, "Art Making from Mexico to China," which Mr. Mellquist discusses, is devoted to Mexican subjects.

BEVERIDGE AND THE BBC. Donald Attwater writes of the reaction of the British people to the last five years of radio programming there, operated, unlike our own system, as a public-service monopoly. Mr. Attwater explains why the Beveridge Committee strongly favors continuation of this monopoly.

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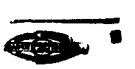

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